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C O N F I D E N T I A L ABU DHABI 001222

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/28/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [IR](#) [AE](#)

SUBJECT: DRL DAS BARKS-RUGGLES HEARS UAE VIEWS ON IRAN

Classified By: Ambassador Michele J. Sison, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: On March 18, Ambassador and DRL DAS Erica Barks-Ruggles met with MFA U/S Abdullah Rashid al-Noaimi to discuss Iran and other bilateral issues. Iran is proceeding full speed ahead to develop its nuclear program, but al-Noaimi advised against adopting just a confrontational approach with the Iranians. He reiterated the UAEG position that Iran's nuclear program is a security threat. He opined that there is a lack of stability in the Gulf resulting from the imbalance of power between Iraq, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. Barks-Ruggles told al-Noaimi that the U.S. is interested in hearing more about a conceptual Gulf security architecture that would improve the situation. DAS Barks-Ruggles' discussions on UAE bilateral issues (human rights, labor, TIP, and domestic reform), and discussions about Iran with non-UAEG interlocutors, will be covered septel. End Summary.

¶2. (C) MFA U/S Abdullah Rashid al-Noaimi stressed that the UAE deals with Iran on a myriad of issues important to the U.S., including the disputed islands, security in the Gulf, Iraq, Lebanon, and Palestine. Asked for his assessment of Iran's intentions on its nuclear program, U/S al-Noaimi believes Iran is forging full speed ahead and will continue to do so if left alone. The program predates the current administration by years; it is part of Iran's ambition to extend its power. It is Iran's stated ambition to have a say throughout the region, including Afghanistan, Yemen, Central Asia, and Pakistan. He reiterated the common complaint that the Iranian system is constructed so that no one ever gets direct access to the decision makers, and that the MFA and Secretary of the Supreme Council for National Security Ali

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Larijani are only front offices. He stressed that verification of any deal on the nuclear issue would be key to any agreement, that Iranians cannot be trusted. On the other hand, he advised against adopting purely a confrontational tack with Iran, and advised a carrot-and-stick approach.

¶3. (C) Al-Noaimi said the UAE viewed Iran's nuclear program as a security threat, and has both publicly and privately flagged its concerns, including the paucity of safeguards and unclear environmental risks. Even without nuclear capability, UAE views Iran's military capability as dangerous, including its missiles, submarines, and (unspecified) research programs. Al-Noaimi claimed that whenever any one of the three major regional powers -- Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia -- feels stronger than the other two, it begins to push beyond its borders (both literally and figuratively), raising the prospects of instability. Referring to "security differentials" in the Gulf, he said that absent a balance of power, international powers have been brought in to ensure stability.

¶4. (C) DAS Barks-Ruggles noted that Washington would be interested in conceptual ideas on regional security. There

is an appreciation for the complexities of the Iran-Gulf relationship, and the concept of a Gulf security architecture which would improve the situation without constantly requiring the U.S. to act as the stabilizer has been batted about in academic and think tank circles. Progress on these regional issues could assist progress on other "harder" issues.

15. (U) This message was cleared by DRL DAS Barks-Ruggles.  
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